

**Testimony of Marjorie Cramer, MD, FACS  
in support of CT House Bill No. 6565,  
An Act Concerning Humane Education**

For the Education Committee

March 9, 2009

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Marjorie Cramer. I am a plastic surgeon and the mother of 2 children. I am here today to express my strong support for HB 6565, An Act Concerning Humane Education. I would specifically like to address the issue of dissection choice.

Because I grew up in England, I was not asked to dissect in grade school or high school. Today, it is possible to graduate from medical school without ever having dissected an animal. It is hard to imagine that such an exercise could possibly be helpful to children.

Even if teachers present dissection as simply cutting up an already dead animal, it doesn't take very much imagination for a child to understand that the dead animal had been killed somewhere along the way. This can be extremely distressing to a child's sense of reverence for life. Some of these children will grow up to be doctors. In order to treat patients, physicians need to nurture their respect for life rather than suppress or subvert it.

The psychological stress of being forced to do something such as dissection which is opposed to many children's innate ethical standards can produce both short-term and long-term sequelae, ranging from nightmares to depression. We owe to our children the right to grow emotionally as well as physically.

Physicians can learn to treat patients and pilots can learn to fly planes using models, so it must be possible for children to learn about science using them. Interactive video programs and models are readily available to pre-college students. The fact these programs can be used over and over, reduces the cost of science materials.

Teachers often believe that children refuse to do dissection simply because they are squeamish, and they and other students may harass them for the same reason. No child should be required to sustain such misunderstanding and abuse in order to acquire knowledge which can better be obtained in other ways. As a surgeon who performed surgery daily for 30 years, I believe I can safely say that I am a model of one who is non-squeamish but who objects to dissection.

As a scientist I believe that we need to encourage the best and brightest of our students to pursue scientific careers. Many bright students have been turned away from a medical or scientific career because they decided not to take a course in which dissection was required. Our future depends on having scientists who will push back the frontiers of knowledge. Dissection choice is a way to nurture scientific curiosity while nurturing respect for life.

I hope that the Committee will give its full support to HB6565.

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